



Mobility & Migration Among Sex Workers: Violence, Sexual Risks, Barriers to Care & Enhanced Social & Economic Opportunities

Background

Despite research on the health and safety of mobile and migrant populations in the formal and informal sectors globally, limited information is available regarding the working conditions, health, and safety of sex workers who engage in short-term mobility and migration.

The Question

How does short-term mobility / migration among sex workers in Vancouver, BC impact their work environment, health, and safety?

The Study

The Gender & Sexual Health Initiative (GSHI) research team drew upon data from **questionnaires and interviews with 646 street and off-street sex workers in Vancouver, BC between January 2010 and August 2012**. This project is part of AESHA (An Evaluation of Sex Workers Health Access), a longitudinal ethnographic and quantitative study on working conditions, health and safety in the sex industry led by GSHI/BCCfE and UBC, in collaboration with a range of community partners, with ongoing outreach to street and indoor sex work venues (by experiential and non-experiential team).

The Results

Of 646 sex workers interviewed, **10.84% worked or lived in another city, province, or country** during the study.

Mobile/migrant sex workers were more likely to:

- Be younger;
- Work in indoor sex work establishments; and
- Earn higher income.

Mobility and migration were also correlated with:

- Reduced control over sexual negotiation with intimate partners; and
- Reduced health care access.

Mobility for sex work purposes was correlated with:

- Enhanced workplace sexual/physical violence.

Short-term mobility and migration appeared to increase social and economic opportunities, but also seemed to confer risks through less control over work environment and isolation from health services.

The Policy Implications

- Structural interventions, including policy support to allow for more formal organizing of sex work collectives and access to workplace safety standards, remain critical to supporting health, safety and access to care, as do tailored, peer-based interventions aimed at reducing isolation and improving mobile/migrant sex workers' control over their working conditions,

Goldenberg S, Chettiar J, Nguyen P, Dobrer S, Montaner J, Shannon K. Complexities of short-term mobility for sex work and migration among sex workers: Violence and sexual risks, barriers to care, and enhanced social and economic opportunities. *Journal of Urban Health*, 2014.